NORTH WITCHFORD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year, 1955.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present to you my report for the year 1955 on the health condition of your district during that period.

I also present the Sanitary Inspector's report.

I have the honour to be, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CECIL THOMAS,
Medical Officer of Health.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR HEALTH SERVICES

(1) Public Health Committee.

This comprises the whole Council.

(2) Public Health Officers.

Medical Officer of Health—CECIL THOMAS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P
Sanitary Inspector—JOHN METCALFE, M.R.S.H.

(3) Nursing in the Home.

The entire district has the services of Trained Nurses under the control of the Local Authority.

(4) Hospital.

Most patients are now treated at Doddington Hospital.

(5) Ambulance Facilities.

These are controlled by the County Council.

(6) Child Welfare.

Clinics are held at Doddington and Manea.

Social Conditions.

The bulk of the adult population is engaged in agricultural work and there are a considerable number of small-holdings under the control of the Isle of Ely County Council. Agricultural work also provides seasonal employment for many of the female adult population.

General Statistics.

Area (acres)	26,088
Population (estimated mid year by Registrar General)	4,830
Number of inhabited houses	1,634
Rateable Value	£14,836
Estimated net product of a penny rate	£57

The estimated population is the same as for the previous year. The census return in 1951 was 5,023.

Vital Statistics.

Table 1. Live Births:

	M.	F.	Total
Legitimate	27	35	62
Illegitimate	2	—	2
	29	35	64

The birth rate at 13.25 per 1,000 population indicates a decrease on that of the previous year (15.11 with 73 births) and is below the birth rate for England and Wales at 15.00 per 1,000 population.

Table 2. Still Births:

There was one still birth (Female—illegitimate) in the District during 1955, giving a Still Birth Death Rate of 15.38 per 1,000 live and still births. For England and Wales the figure for 1955 was 23.1.

Table 3. Infantile Mortality:

There was one death for infants under 1 year of age, this being a child (male) under 4 weeks of age. The Infantile Mortality rate for the year was 15.62 per 1,000 live births, compared with 24.9 per 1,000 live births for the whole country.

Table 4. Deaths in Area and Causes:

	M.	F.	Total
Maglignant neoplasm stomach	2	—	2
Maglignant neoplasm breast	—	1	1
Other Malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	1	2	3
Vascular lesions of nervous system	5	5	10
Coronary disease angina	1	—	1
Other heart diseases	3	3	6
Other circulatory diseases	—	1	1
Influenza	—	1	1
Bronchitis	2	1	3
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	2	—	2
Nephritis and nephrosis	2	1	3
Other defined and ill defined diseases	4	10	14
Motor vehicle accidents	—	1	1
All other accidents	1	1	2
Suicide	1	—	1
	24	27	51

The death rate for 1955 was 10.55 per 1,000 population compared with 11.7 for England and Wales. For the previous year the District death rate (with 41 deaths) was 8.48 per 1,000 population as against 11.3 for the whole country.

Notifiable Infectious Diseases.

Diseases.	Total Notified.
Pneumonia	17
Infective jaundice	1
Meningitis	1
Measles	76
Glandular Tuberculosis	2
Puerperal Pyrexia	1
Scarlet Fever	7
Erysipelas	1
Enteritis	1
Poliomylelitis	1
Infective encephalitis	1
Pertussis	6
Gastro-enteritis	1
Tuberculosis	1
	117

Food Poisoning Outbreaks.

There were no notified outbreaks of food poisoning in the Rural District during 1955.

NORTH WITCHFORD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Sanitary Inspector's Report for the Year, 1955.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

The following are the numbers of visits and inspections carried out during 1955:

Water Supply	33
Drainage	58
Fried Fish Shops	5
Vans and Sheds	16
Factories	24
Bakehouses	9
Sanitary Accommodation	48
Refuse Dumps	10
Rats and Mice (including premises visited by Rodent Operator)	74
Manure and Refuse Accumulations	13
Miscellaneous Sanitary Visits	47
Nightsoil Disposal	4
Sewers and Sewage Disposal Works	64
Dykes	23
Building Byelaws	295
Drain and Sewer Tests	25
Piggeries	2
Petroleum Installations	4

Inspection of Dwelling Houses.

(1) Number of houses inspected under Public Health Acts and Housing Consolidated Regulations (excluding Council Houses)	52
(2) Number of Inspections for the above purpose	72
(3) Number of houses visited in connection with Slum Clearance Survey	144
(4) Number of Inspections at verminous houses	3
(5) Number of visits to houses in connection with infectious Disease	2
(6) Number of Inspections and Visits to houses in connection with Improvement Grants	82
(7) Number of Visits to Council Houses — Repairs, maintenance, and complaints, etc.	783

Meat and Food Inspection.

Butchers' Shops and Slaughterhouses	21
Grocers' Shops	11
Ice Cream Premises (Retail)	5
Interviews and Meetings attended	1,276

Notices Served.

Number of Written Informal Notices served	14
No. of above complied with	9
No. of above where work in hand at close of year	2
Demolition Orders served	2
Demolition Orders carried out (including those made pre 1955)	10
No. of Closing Orders made	3
Closing Orders Revoked and Demolition Orders made in lieu	1
Undertakings accepted under Section 11(3) of Housing Act, 1936	3
Statutory Notices (Public Health Act) served and complied with	1

Housing.

During the year 18—3 bedroom type semi-detached houses and 14 semi-detached bungalows were erected and handed over for occupation, thus completing the immediate post-war housing schemes. The total number of dwellings erected since 1945 is now 128 houses and 24 Old Peoples' Bungalows. In addition 15 temporary prefabricated (aluminium) bungalows have been erected.

These houses, together with the houses erected prior to 1939, are situated in the respective parishes as follows:

Parish	Pop. 1951	Post-War Dwellings Houses 3 bedrm.	2 bedrm.	O.P. Bungalows	Prefab. Bungalows	Pre-war Houses 3 bedrm.
Benwick	690	24	2	-	-	8
Doddington	1460	34	8	6	5	16
Manea	1425	16	2	10	5	30
Wimblington	1379	34	8	8	5	30
Welches Dam	69	-	-	-	-	-
	5023	108	20	24	15	84

A layout was approved during the year for the erection of 30 three-bedroomed houses on land owned by the Council at the rear of an existing housing scheme in Westfield Road, Manea. A tender for the construction of the necessary roads, sewers and sewage disposal works was accepted at the end of the year.

In addition negotiations were commenced for the acquisition of a suitable site in Benwick village for the erection of further houses as part of the slum clearance programme.

Sixteen new dwellings were completed by private enterprise in 1955 and five more were under construction at the end of the year.

The completion of the original post-war housing schemes has assisted in the re-housing of further families from sub-standard houses, in respect of which action has been taken under the Housing Act, 1936, to secure demolition, or closure, or reconditioning. As a result of the survey carried out under the Government's Five Year Plan under Section 1 of the Housing Repairs and Rents Act, 1954, it is estimated that there are 145 houses unfit for human habitation in the District within the meaning of Section 9 of the Act and suitable for action under Section 11 of the Housing Act, 1936. Owing to the pressure of other duties it has not been possible to make a detailed survey of all of the houses provisionally included in the schedule for slum clearance; the proposals are therefore in the nature of an estimate.

Two Demolition Orders were made during the year and three Closing Orders, one of which was subsequently revoked and a Demolition Order made in lieu when the adjacent cottage became empty. In addition, undertakings not to relet were accepted in respect of three dwellings. One other dwelling was reconditioned as a result of formal action by the Council. 11 houses were demolished, 10 as a result of Demolition Orders and one voluntarily.

Five written informal notices were served for repairs to houses, of which three had been completed by the end of the year. In addition, repairs were completed to three other houses against informal notices outstanding from the previous year.

As in previous years considerable time was spent in dealing with repairs and maintenance of Council houses and 783 calls were made during the year for this purpose.

Improvement Grants.

15 applications for Improvement Grant were approved during the year, the total value of the Grants amounting to £3,616 12s. 9d. 10 schemes were completed during the year, 8 of which were approved in 1954. Nearly all the schemes are in respect of owner-occupiers and owners of rented houses do not appear to be sufficiently interested in the facilities afforded to take advantage of these grants. 82 inspections (including re-inspections) were made at premises in connection with improvement grants.

One application was received for a grant under Section 3 of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1938 in respect of a pair of dwellings, but the application was subsequently withdrawn before being considered by the Council.

Building Byelaws.

81 plans were deposited with the Council under their Building Byelaws, all of which were approved with the exception of one. 295 inspections were made of premises in connection with the Building Byelaws and 25 drain tests were carried out. The Building Byelaws operating in the Council's area are based on the Model issued by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and came into operation on the 7th November, 1953.

Water Supply.

The following is the information requested by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government:—

(i) In those parts of the parishes of Doddington, Wimblington and Benwick served by the Wisbech and District Water Board, the water supply has been adequate in quantity and there have been no complaints as to quality.

So far as the parish of Manea is concerned, there is little change from the previous year and daytime pressure will remain unsatisfactory until the new trunk main in course of construction is completed. This new main will afford a supply to the village of Stonea, which at present relies on rain water and river water for drinking and domestic purposes, augmented by mains water carted when necessary. Welches Dam relies on similar arrangements. Owing to the occurrence of two periods of drought during the summer months it was necessary to cart mains water for distribution amongst householders at Stonea on 7 occasions, 1,000 gallons being carted in each instance. Water is carted privately to other areas in the District as the need arises.

(ii) Routine independent sampling of piped water supplies is not carried out, as the Water Board's Chemist carries out frequent bacteriological examinations of the mains water at selected sampling points. Five samples were, however, taken independently upon request at Doddington Hospital to check upon the purity of the storage tanks. The reports on these samples, which were examined by the Pubic Health Laboratory at Cambridge, indicated that the water is satisfactory.

(iii) No action by the Council was necessary in respect of contamination.

(iv) The local supply of water is not plumbo-solvent.

(v) Proportion of dwelling houses supplied from public mains:

Parish	Direct to Houses.	By Standpipe.
Wimblington	85%	2½%
Doddington	75%	2%
Manea	81%	9%
Welches Dam	18%	Nil
Benwick	63%	23%

For the following report of Water Analyses and Schedule of Works I am indebted to Mr. William D. Brighton (Chemist and Bacteriologist) and Mr. J. K. Dawson, A.M.I.C.E., A.M.I.W.E. (Water Engineer) of the Wisbech and District Water Board:—

Water Analyses, 1955, North Witchford Rural District.

"Frequent bacteriological examinations were again carried out from sampling points in March, Doddington and Chatteris, of the piped supply to the parishes of Benwick, Doddington, Wimblington and Manea.

There was no contamination throughout the year.

Bacteriological examinations were made of every new length of main put into service, and none was passed for supply until the examination showed negative results.

Chemical analyses were also performed on samples, chiefly from source works, but also from other parts of the district."

	Number taken	No. giving positive result	No. giving negative result	% negative
A. Bact. Samples at March	84	Nil	84	100%
B. Bact. Samples at Doddington	25	Nil	25	100%
C. Bact. Samples at Chatteris	104	Nil	104	100%
Totals	213	Nil	213	100%

Schedule of work carried out in the North Witchford Rural District,

1st January — 31st December, 1955.

New Mains Laid.

Eastwood End Lane, Wimblington — — — — — — — — 87 yards 3in. main
12in. Stowbridge — Wimblington main — — — — — 4,961 yards 12in. main

Number of Premises Connected.

Benwick — — — — — — — — — — — — —	16
Manea — — — — — — — — — — — — —	12
Wimblington — — — — — — — — — —	10
Doddington — — — — — — — — — — —	2
	40

During the year a progress report was submitted to the Council on the connection to the new water mains in Benwick, the position in September 1955 being as follows:—

	Connected.	Not Connected.
Number of domestic premises — — — —	168	38
Number of business premises — — — — —	12	2

Owners of dwelling houses not connected to the mains were notified by letter of the Council's duty under the Public Health Act, 1936 to see that every occupied house has an adequate supply of wholesome water and requesting that steps be taken to connect their respective properties to the new water mains. At the end of the year there were still 26 occupied houses in Benwick village not connected to the water mains. Except in the cases of financial hardship it is difficult to understand the reluctance of some owner occupiers to avail themselves of a piped supply of pure water in lieu of rain water which is obviously contaminated by birds and soot etc., quite apart from the inadequacy of the supply during dry weather. In some cases it appears that television takes precedence over a pure water supply.

Application for a "Fringe Order" to afford a supply of water to Fortrey Hall Farm in Welches Dam parish was received during the year from Ely R.D.C., which was approved. Four farm cottages in the Council's area are served by this supply.

The seven Rural Water Main Extension Schemes mentioned in the Annual Report for 1954 were submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for approval and grant under the Water Supplies and Sewerage Act, 1944. These schemes cover the following areas:

NW.	1. From existing water main to Benwick at Copalder Corner along Flood's Ferry Road to R.D. boundary — — — — —	2,460 yards
,,	2. Parsonland Drove, Doddington (from Benwick Road) — —	2,437 ,,
,,	3. Coneywood Fen, Doddington (from Wood Street) — — —	2,150 ,,
,,	4. Eastalls Road, Doddington (from Church Lane) — — — —	963 ,,
,,	5. Days Lode Drove, Fodder Fen, Manea — — — — — — —	1,900 ,,
,,	6. Fifties Road, Manea (from Tips End) — — — — — — —	4,876 ,,
,,	7. Welches Dam (from Straight Road, Manea) — — — — —	3,780 ,,

A local inquiry was held on 16th December, 1955, by the Engineering Inspector of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government into these proposed Water Main Extension Schemes in conjunction with the proposals by the neighbouring local authority, March Urban District Council. The Ministry have notified approval of the schemes in principle but the amount of the grant has not been fixed.

Drainage and Sewerage.

Certain portions of the oldest built-up areas of Doddington, Wimblington and Manea are served by old combined storm water and foul sewers, all of which discharge into obsolete works or open dykes. It is not surprising therefore that considerable pollution by sewage matter occurs in such dykes, and in turn in the

drains forming part of the extensive land drainage system in the area, resulting in complaints from land users and Drainage Boards. With the advent of piped water supply in the village of Benwick, the need for a proper drainage system becomes apparent, since many occupiers wish to add modern amenities to their property long denied them owing to the absence of an adequate water supply.

It is not possible to report any real progress during the year with the proposed sewerage scheme for Benwick. The Consulting Engineer visited the village early in January, 1955, for the purpose of interviewing a Sub-Committee with a view to modifying the original scheme prepared in 1945. The subsequent report was not received until the autumn and was deferred for review in 1957 in response to the Government's request for local authorities to refrain from undertaking new services involving additional expenditure. Unfortunately this decision adversely affects the Council's proposals to develop additional land in the village for housing purposes.

The post-war housing estates at Wimblington and Manea have been equipped with modern sewage disposal plants, whilst Doddington estate has a septic tank outfall connected with the filter beds to the old sewage disposal works for the village. The Benwick post-war houses have individual cesspools pending the provision of main drainage for the village and these give cause for embarrassment owing to the low lying site.

A small drainage scheme was approved and commenced for a group of eight pre-war Council houses at Benwick with an outfall to a septic tank, this being a temporary expedient to deal with the additional waste water as a result of a piped water supply.

Apart from the usual maintenance work of cleansing sewage outfall dykes and emptying settlement tanks and catchpits at outfall works, no extensive repair or reconstruction of sewers was undertaken during the year.

Drainage disposal to such other houses as are provided with drainage systems is, in the main, by use of septic tanks, cesspools and soakwells, which function with varying degrees of success. A large number of houses, particularly in Manea and Benwick, are provided with pail closets, and many other properties have vault closets.

Public Cleansing.

Night soil is still collected by contractors, composted with straw and utilised on arable land. The contracts provide for three collections of closet pails per fortnight and some 500 closets are dealt with. This collection used to be done during the hours of darkness, but in recent years with the shortage of labour it has been the practice in most portions of the area (in common with other districts) to make collections in the day time and it has become an unpleasant necessity to have vehicles collecting pail contents standing and operating in the streets in broad daylight.

It is gratifying to be able to report the conversions during the year of pail and vault type closets to water closets connected to existing sewers or individual cesspools at 43 premises in the District. This progress is partially due to a resolution made by the Council to cease emptying the pails and vaults at properties in Doddington on the line of existing sewers and water mains after 31st March, 1956, 12 months warning being given to the owners and occupiers. By the end of 1955 conversion to the water carriage system had been carried out at 14 premises in Doddington, as a result of the warning notices regarding the cessation of night soil collection. 13 conversions were affected at premises in the District in respect of which Improvement Grants had been authorised. In addition a new sanitary block was provided at Benwick C.P. School by the Isle of Ely County Council; this included eight water closets and all the schools in the area now have water borne sanitation.

Cesspools and vaults are emptied upon request by occupiers by one of the Contractors, who uses a cesspool emptier for this purpose. The contents are either discharged over arable land or disposed at the night soil tipping points.

Tins and indestructible household refuse are collected at monthly intervals by contract, employing the kerbside method. Disposal is effected in disused gravel pits, where the refuse is periodically covered with soil specially carted to the site. Unfortunately these sites are open to all-comers and a certain amount of indiscriminate tipping occurs which makes it difficult and expensive to cover the entire tipping face with soil. The refuse contractors carried out their duties very satisfactorily during the year under review.

Milk Supply.

The bulk of the milk supply is now distributed by two firms operating from dairies situated outside the District. Such milk is either Tuberculin Tested or Pasteurised.

The following licences were issued during the year under the Milk (Special Designations) Regulations, 1949:

Supplementary Licences:	Pasteurised	2
	Tuberculin Tested	2
	Tuberculin Tested Milk (Pasteurised)	1
	Sterilised	1

During the year official notification was received that one Dairy Farmer and his premises had been struck off the register owing to the failure of the proprietor to bring his premises up to a satisfactory standard. This particular Dairy Farmer was also a Milk Retailer in the Council's area and he has since obtained a supply of bottled milk from a registered dairy in an adjoining district. Plans have been deposited for the construction of a new cowshed and dairy.

Meat and Other Food Inspection.

There are only 3 slaughterhouses licensed in the Rural District under S.57 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, the licences of which all expire on 16th August, 1957. These slaughterhouses are rarely used except for occasional casualties and a few pigs killed for private consumption. The six butchers who have shops in the District have nearly all their animals slaughtered in the neighbouring Urban District. No premises have been licensed for Deadweight Certification of Pigs.

During the year only one beast and 9 pigs for public consumption were killed and inspected at licensed slaughterhouses in the area. The carcase and organs of one pig were rejected as being unfit for human consumption owing to carcinomatosis.

Foodstuffs inspected at Grocers' shops and voluntarily surrendered as being unfit for human consumption, included 3 tins of corned beef, total weight 18lbs.

Ice Cream.

No Ice Cream is manufactured in the area. There are 13 premises registered for the storage and sale of ice cream, being one less than the previous year.

Food Premises.

(1) The number of food premises in the area is as follows:

Grocer and general provision stores	18
Confectioners only	2
Butchers	6
Bakers	5
Greengrocer only	1
Fried Fish Shops	6
Cafes	2

(2) 13 premises are registered under Section 14 of the Food and Drugs Act for the sale of Ice Cream. There are no dairies in the District.

(3) 11 inspections were made during the year of premises registered for the sale of Ice Cream.

(4) No special activity has been undertaken during the year regarding clean food campaigns. Byelaws for handling food have been adopted under Section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938.

(5) The small quantities of condemned tinstuffs have been disposed of by burial at the refuse dumps. Rejected meat is either removed for disposal by burial or in the case of whole carcases coloured with appropriate dye prior to removal by Knacker man.

Moveable Dwellings.

There are no large caravan sites in the area. Nine licences were issued under Section 269 of the Public Health Act, 1936, authorising the use of caravans for a limited period on individual sites. Periodical inspections are made to ensure observance of sanitary requirements.

Rodent Control.

Comparatively few complaints have been received regarding infestation generally, and these have all been dealt with. The various sewage dykes and refuse tips are treated regularly by the Council's employee. The Pest Department of the Isle of Ey County Agricultural Executive Committee carry out a considerable amount of rat destruction in the area, having contracts for the treatment of over 100 premises.

Factories Acts, 1937 and 1948.

1. Inspections.

	Number on Register.	Number of Inspections	Number of Written Notices.
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are enforced by the Local Authority	6	10	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the local Authority.	21	23	2
Total	27	33	2

Cases in which defects were found.

	Found.	Remedied.
Want of cleanliness	5	5
Sanitary Conveniences unsuitable or defective	2	2
Total	7	7

There are no outworkers employed.

J. METCALFE,
Sanitary Inspector.

3rd July, 1956.

Factories Act, 1937 and 1940.

1. Large Cases:

(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are enforced by the Local Authority

Number on Register.	Number of Large Cases.	Written Notices.
6	10	—
91	24	2
97	34	2

(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority.

Total

Cases in which defects were found.

	Found.	Remedied.
Want of Cleanliness	5	5
Sanitary Conveniences unsuitable or defective	2	2
Total	7	7

There are no outworkers employed.

J. MEDCALFE,
Sanitary Inspector.

4th July, 1940.